

## Teachers Notes

These notes to accompany *The Legend of Lasseter's Reef* provide suggestions for classroom activities based on or linked to the book's text and illustrations and highlight points for discussion.

## Synopsis

Lasseter's search for an elusive and mysterious gold reef is one of the world's great mysteries and holds a significant place in Australian folklore. His tale of lost treasure is an enduring one that stimulates the imagination. It is a universal story, yet uniquely Australian - a quest set in a land of adventure.

Lasseter's journey is a story of expectation and confrontation with reality, the pitting of man against an unknown environment. Lasseter challenged the outback. He undertook a rugged and astonishing journey to find extraordinary wealth buried in the earth. Having found it, Lasseter reveals through his diary how he longed for those he would never see again.

## On Writing "The Legend of Lasseter's Reef"

by Mark Greenwood

The story of lost gold in the dead heart of Australia has fascinated me ever since I first began researching the story of Lasseter's Reef in 1994. Over the years I collected information from libraries and numerous archive sources throughout Australia. I traveled to remote Central Australia, accompanied by Aboriginal guides from the Docker River settlement. I retraced the vast area covered by Harold Lasseter in his extraordinary search for a fabled gold reef. I visited the cave where his famous diary was uncovered and many other localities connected with Lasseter in order to recreate his legend into an illustrated book.

## About the Author

Mark Greenwood is an author and musician. His books and songs have been published internationally. Mark's series of children's books, "Magic Boomerang", "Outback Adventure" and "Our Big Island", were prompted by an interest in multicultural literature and the unique way illustrated books can assist children to develop an understanding of other cultures and perspectives.

Mark's book, *The Legend of Moondyne Joe* is the winner of the 2002 WA Premiers Award. *The Legend of Lasseter's Reef* aims to encourage an appreciation of Australia's unique myths and legends.

Mark enjoys working with students of all ages, inspiring and developing their natural curiosity about books and writing.

### About the Illustrations

Having collected a vast treasure of documents, photographs, books, letters and maps Mark began to consider the art and design component of the book. Although a primitive style of illustration was appropriate for a setting of vast open spaces and a tale of wealth beyond dreams, he also wanted to include historical details to balance the innocence and freedom of expression of the illustrations.

Mark wanted the illustrations to leave the textures and frontier qualities of Central Australia to the imagination and invite the reader into the events in Lasseter's haunting story.

### Suggestions for classroom activities

Talk / write / research life in the days of the prospectors, the gold rush, the depression.

Imagine you were suddenly transported back in time. What was life like in the Central Australia at the turn of the century?

Follow the unfolding train of events in Lasseter's search to find riches in the mysterious dead heart of the Australian Outback. Create a time-line of the important dates and places in the story of Lasseter's Reef and include in it your own illustrations.

Using the book's endpapers and maps as a guide, design your own map to Lasseter's Reef. Include illustrations and clues to the gold.

Research and write about other lost treasures.

Look at the reasons why people explored Australia and the hardships they endured.

Who was Bob Buck? Who was Harding? Develop the characters of Lasseter, Bob Buck, Harding, the C.A.G.E. expedition members, the Afghan Cameleer, the Aboriginal elder.

Discuss what made Lasseter different from other prospectors.

Imagine you are an explorer or prospector - write a diary entry titled: "My first day in uncharted land". Describe the textures of the Australian outback and its frontier qualities.

Newsflash! Write a front-page story about someone finding Lasseter's Reef. Design your own article with a catchy title, sub-headings, text and illustrations.

Write a song or poem about Lasseter's lost treasure of gold.

Research & describe the country Lasseter explored: the flora, fauna, landmarks, and colours.

Retell the story from an Aboriginal perspective.

Make your own diary using antiqued paper and cloth or card cover.

The story and its themes

Discuss the theme of journeys, expectation and confrontation with realities, the pitting of man against an unknown environment and how important they are to the historical origins of other Australian stories of explorers and legends.

Lasseter challenged the outback. He dragged on beneath the sun, his tongue bursting with thirst and his mind suffering from the disorientation of the desert. He undertook a rugged and astonishing journey to find extraordinary wealth buried in the earth. Discuss the strength of spirit nurtured by a life in search of gold.

Why does the story of Lasseter's Reef have such an appeal? Why has his treasure never been found? Does Lasseter's Reef exist?

Discussion - Does an appreciation of our goldrush history, give us a better understanding of ourselves, and our culture?

The Cover & Endpapers

Ask students to look closely at the front cover and endpapers. Have them jot down quickly, like a brainstorming session, their responses. What questions come to mind? What might the story be about? When is the story set?

Questions based on the text

Where did Lasseter bury his papers, maps and letters?

What was rumored to be hidden in Central Australia?

Why was it dangerous to travel through uncharted land?

Why was Lasseter disappointed at the McDonnell Ranges?

Where might Lasseter's Reef be?

How did Lasseter find the reef?

When did Lasseter first find gold?

What are the landmarks that identify the location of the gold reef?

Who rescued Lasseter?

Who was Harding and what was he doing in the desert?

Why couldn't Lasseter guide investors to the gold?

What was special about the agreement Lasseter deposited at the Sydney bank?

What does C.A.G.E. stand for?

What was the name of the expedition's aeroplane?

Where did Lasseter first meet the dingo trapper?

According to Lasseter, can the reef be seen from the air?

What happened to the truck and the aeroplane?

Why did Lasseter go on alone?

What can be found in the centre of three fires at Lake Christopher?

Describe Lasseter country.

What happened at Lake Amadeus?

What landmarks did Lasseter recognize?

Why did Lasseter's camels run away?

Where did Lasseter find shelter?

Who befriended Lasseter?

What happened at the cave?

Lasseter's only chance of survival was to ...

What was in Lasseter's Diary?

What did the carving on the tree outside the cave mean?

Where did Lasseter bury his diary?

What does Lasseter's writing tell us about him?

Where is Lasseter's grave?

What was Bob Buck renowned for?

Whose grave did Bob Buck find?

Why is Lasseter a legend?

Will Lasseter's reef ever be found?

Further reading for teachers

'Lasseter's Last Ride' Idriess, Ion Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1980

'Lasseter, in quest of gold' Marshall-Stoneking, Billy Sydney: Hodder & Stoughton, 1989

'On Lasseter's trail' Clacherty, Desmond Victoria: Malvern Press, 1989

'Hell's Airport and Lasseter's lost legacy' Coote, Errol S.A.: Investigator Press, 1981

'Lasseter did not lie!' Stapleton, Austin S.A.: Investigator Press, 1981

'Lasseter's Dream of Millions' Blakeley, Fred Sydney: Transpareon Press, 1984

'Does Lasseter's Reef really exist?' Terry, Michael N.S.W.: Thomson Publishing, 1970

'Lasseter, The Making of a Legend' Marshall-Stoneking, Billy Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1985

'Lasseter Demystified and Two German Rouseabouts' Scherer, P.A.S.A.: Scherer, 1996

'The Search for Harold Lasseter' Hubbard, Murray N.S.W.: Angus & Robertson, 1993

'Lasseter's Diary' Lasseter, Harold Bell Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1986

Bailey, J., 'History of Lasseter's Reef', State Library of New South Wales.

Blatchford, T., letter to Central Australian Gold Exploration Co. Ltd (CAGE) Chairman, 18 February 1932, Batty Library.

CAGE Papers, State Library of New South Wales.

Terry, Michael, Untold Miles, Selwyn & Blount, London, 1933;

Sand and Sun, M. Joseph Ltd, London, 1937; Does Lasseter's Reef Really Exist?, Thomson Publishing, 1970.

Various newspaper articles, manuscripts and books held in the Mitchell Library Collection, State Library of New South Wales, State Records Office and Battye Library, State Library of Western Australia, National Archives of Australia, National Library of Australia and Northern Territory Library and Information Service

Interesting places to visit

Lasseter's Cave

Peterman Ranges

Rawlinson Ranges

Uluru (Ayers Rock) and Katajuta (The Olgas)

Further Information

These notes are provided for free. For more extensive notes & information regarding school bookings for the book's author contact: [artbeat@ozemail.com.au](mailto:artbeat@ozemail.com.au)